

## **WDFW Weekender Report - Fishing for The Fourth**

### **Local News**

Posted by: David Haviland

Posted on : June 24, 2010 at 6:13 am

Salmon fishing in Washington state traditionally kicks into high gear around the Fourth of July, although this year's celebration started early in waters stretching from the upper Columbia River to the Pacific Coast. In saltwater and fresh, anglers have been reeling in bright hatchery-reared chinook salmon since various dates in June.

"The ocean fishery has been up and down from one day to the next, but anglers have definitely been taking home some nice chinook salmon," said Doug Milward, ocean fisheries manager at the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). "Chinook caught off Westport have been averaging around 15 pounds, which is big for this point in the season."

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But there are still plenty of fireworks left over for July Fourth. By then, several new areas of Puget Sound will be open for salmon fishing, and anglers fishing off the coast also will be able to open their creels to hatchery coho and unmarked chinook.

Rather catch some crab? Seven popular areas of Puget Sound open to fishing for Dungeness crab July 1, including marine areas 6 (Eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca), 8-1 (Deception Pass/Skagit Bay), 8-2 (Port Susan/Port Gardner), 9 (Admiralty Inlet), 10 (Seattle/Bremerton), 11 (Tacoma/Vashon) and 12 (Hood Canal).

Just as July Fourth is a big day for outdoor recreation, it is also a busy day for law enforcement, said Mike Cenci, WDFW deputy enforcement chief. He said the department's officers will be working overtime throughout the holiday weekend to enforce state fishing regulations and protect public safety.

“My main message to anglers and crab fishers is to make sure you understand the fishing regulations before you head for the water,” Cenci said. “Our goal is to protect the resource and keep people safe. We really don’t enjoy issuing citations, but a violation is a violation, whether or not it’s intentional.”

With regard to public safety, Cenci noted that the weekend of June 26-27 is Operation Dry Water, when law enforcement officers throughout the nation will crack down on boating under the influence of alcohol or drugs. “Boaters in Washington state need to know that WDFW’s authority does not end with enforcing fishing and hunting regulations.”

State fishing regulations are outlined in WDFW’s Fishing in Washington rule pamphlet, available from license vendors statewide and posted on the department’s website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>. Anglers can also call WDFW’s Fishing Hotline (360-902-2500) for updates.

With regard to public safety, Cenci noted that the weekend of June 26-27 is Operation Dry Water, when law enforcement officers throughout the nation will crack down on boating under the influence of alcohol or drugs. “Boaters in Washington state should be aware that WDFW’s authority does not end with enforcing fishing and hunting regulations,” he said.

With that in mind, anglers and others planning to spend some time outdoors can find highlights of recreational opportunities now available throughout the state in the regional reports below.

[pagebreak:North Puget Sound]

Fishing: Fishing has been slow for anglers on the saltwater, but catch numbers could rise as more marine areas open for salmon in July. On the rivers, anglers continue to cast for steelhead and spring chinook, and some have recently hooked a few nice fish.

Meanwhile, the crab fishery opens July 1 in marine areas 8-1 (Deception Pass, Hope Island and Skagit Bay), 8-2 (Port Susan and Port Gardner), 9 (Admiralty Inlet), 10 (Seattle/Bremerton), 11 (Tacoma/Vashon Island) and 12 (Hood Canal). Fisheries in those areas will be open on a Wednesday-through-Saturday schedule, plus the entire Labor Day weekend.

The daily catch limit in Puget Sound is five Dungeness crab, males only, in hard-shell condition with a minimum carapace width of 6¼ inches. Fishers may catch six red rock crab of either sex per day, provided those crab measure at least 5 inches across. See WDFW's sport-crabbing website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/shelfish/crab/>) for more information.

In Marine Area 8-2, fishing continues to be slow at the Tulalip Bay "bubble" fishery, said Steve Thiesfeld, WDFW fish biologist. The fishery is currently open each week from Friday through noon Monday through Sept. 6. Anglers fishing the bubble have a two-salmon daily limit. Chinook must measure 22 inches in length to retain.

The catch-and-release salmon fishery in the northern portion of Marine Area 10 continues through June 30. However, beginning July 1, anglers fishing in the marine area can retain up to two salmon daily with no minimum size limit. Anglers must release chinook salmon.

Another option is Marine Area 7 (San Juan Islands), which also opens July 1 for salmon. Anglers will have a daily limit of two salmon but can only keep one chinook. "The San Juans really started off strong last year," Thiesfeld said. "Hopefully, the opener will be just as good this year."

Looking for some competition? The Bellingham Salmon Derby is scheduled for July 9-11 with a top prize of \$5,000. For more information on the derby, which is hosted by the Bellingham Chapter of the Puget Sound Anglers in association with the Northwest Marine Trade Association, is available at <http://www.bellinghampsa.com/derby.htm>.

In freshwater, portions of the Skagit, Cascade and Skykomish rivers are open for hatchery chinook salmon fishing. The Skagit is open to hatchery chinook retention from the Highway 530 Bridge at Rockport to the Cascade River. On the Cascade, anglers can fish for salmon from the mouth of the river to the Rockport-Cascade Road Bridge. Both stretches are open through July 15. The daily limit on the Skagit and Cascade rivers is four hatchery chinook, two of which may be adults (chinook salmon at least 24 inches in length).

The Skykomish is open from the mouth to the Wallace River through July 31. Anglers fishing that portion of the river have a daily limit of two hatchery chinook salmon. Jennifer Whitney, WDFW regional fish biologist, advises anglers to keep checking WDFW's website for information about potential fishing regulation changes on the Skykomish River. "Returns to the Wallace River Hatchery so far have been way down this year," she said. "We will continue to watch this run closely and if it doesn't improve we may need to close the river to salmon

retention to ensure the hatchery gets enough fish to meet its spawning goals.&rdquo;

The Reiter Ponds section of the Skykomish River is also open for fishing and some anglers have had success hooking hatchery steelhead there recently. That section of the river (1,500 feet upstream to 1,000 feet downstream of the Reiter Ponds Hatchery outlet) opened June 12 after the hatchery collected enough steelhead broodstock to meet spawning goals.

Anglers should be aware that a section of the South Fork Stillaguamish River was mistakenly omitted from the new sportfishing rules pamphlet. That section of the Stillaguamish, from Mountain Loop Highway Bridge upstream, opened for gamefish June 5. Fishing regulations include catch and release, except two hatchery steelhead may be retained. Selective gear rules also apply, and fishing from a floating device with a motor is prohibited.

Before heading out, anglers should check the rules and regulations for all fisheries on WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm>.

Hunting: Hunters who applied for special big-game hunt permits for the upcoming season can find out if they were chosen by going to the hunt page on the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's website at [www.wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/](http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/). Holders of the special permits can hunt at times and locations beyond those authorized by a general hunting license. Nearly 65,000 hunters submitted 229,761 applications for special hunts for deer, elk, mountain goat, moose, bighorn sheep and wild turkey. The permits will be mailed to successful applicants in mid-July.

Wildlife viewing: Birders are flocking to Marymoor Park in Redmond, where a couple of rare flycatchers have been spotted recently. A Least flycatcher has been seen &ndash; and heard &ndash; numerous times in some cottonwoods north of the bulletin board on the slough trail, while an ash-throated flycatcher has been sighted at the East Meadow. Both flycatchers are uncommon visitors to western Washington, although they can be found east of the Cascades. Least flycatchers &ndash; the smallest flycatchers found in Washington &ndash; are often seen in Okanogan County. The majority of ash-throated flycatchers can be found in southcentral Klickitat County, although a few pairs have been documented in Yakima, Kittitas, Chelan, Grant and Adams counties.

Whales continue to be a main attraction in the region. Gray whales and minke whales have been spotted milling about the waters off Whidbey Island, humpback whales have been seen in the western Strait of Juan de Fuca and orca whales have been sighted off Lime Kiln Point on San Juan Island.

In the interest of wildfire prevention, WDFW officials remind Fourth of July holiday celebrants that fireworks are not allowed on any of WDFW's 900,000-some acres of water access sites and wildlife areas across the state. Campfires are restricted in many areas, too. For details by area, see <http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/>.

[pagebreak:South Sound/Olympic Peninsula]

Fishing: Anglers will have more options to catch salmon in the days ahead as coastal area open to retention of hatchery coho and unmarked chinook, and new fisheries open on the Strait of Juan de Fuca. Crabbers will also be able to drop pots in seven popular areas of Puget Sound, starting July 1.

Through June 20, salmon anglers had caught 2,759 marked chinook salmon in the state's first selective chinook fishery off the Washington coast. All but a few hundred of those fish were taken in Marine Area 2 (Westport), where three in four anglers took home a fish. Mark rates for chinook have been averaging about 70 percent.

"The ocean fishery has been up and down from one day to the next, but anglers have definitely been taking home some nice chinook salmon," said Doug Milward, WDFW ocean fisheries manager. "Chinook caught off Westport have been averaging around 15 pounds, which is big for this point in the season."

Starting July 4, anglers fishing off Westport will also be able to count hatchery coho and unmarked chinook toward their daily limit. The new rule will take effect July 1 in marine areas 1 (Ilwaco), 3 (La Push) and 4 (Neah Bay).

"Like the chinook, this year's coho have been bigger than usual," Milward said. "This fishery should keep getting better and better."

Wendy Beeghley, a WDFW fish biologist who monitors the catch, asks that all anglers return completed logbooks after each day's trip to help fishery managers keep track of the catch. "If you like this fishery, you can help keep it going by filling out the logbook and returning it to WDFW," she said. Logbooks can be returned to fish checkers or by pre-paid mail.

Elsewhere, a chinook fishery will open in marine areas 5 and 6 (Strait of Juan de Fuca) on July 1. The daily limit in those two areas is two fish at least 22 inches in length. All wild salmon must be released.

Meanwhile, recreational halibut fishing went out with a bang June 19, when anglers fishing off Neah Bay and La Push closed out the season by catching most of what was left of this year's quota.

The one-day opening, plus good weather, gave coastal anglers the chance to catch both salmon and halibut on the same day, and some took advantage of that unique opportunity, said Erica Crust, WDFW's ocean port sampler.

Looking ahead, seven popular areas of Puget Sound will open to fishing for crab July 1, including marine areas 6 (Eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca), 8-1 (Deception Pass/Skagit Bay), 8-2 (Port Susan/Port Gardner), 9 (Admiralty Inlet), 10 (Seattle/Bremerton), 11 (Tacoma/Vashon) and 12 (Hood Canal).

Dungeness and red rock crab seasons include:

- Marine areas 4 (east of the Bonilla-Tatoosh line), 5 and 13: Opened June 18 and run through Jan. 2.
- Marine areas 6, 8-1, 8-2, 9, 10, 11 and 12 (much of Puget Sound) — Will open at 7 a.m., July 1 and are open Wednesday through Saturday through Sept. 6, and open the entire Labor Day weekend.

There is a daily limit of five Dungeness crab in Puget Sound. Minimum size is 6 ¼-inches and only males in hardshell condition may be kept. In the Sound, all gear must be removed from the water on days when the fishery is closed.

The daily limit of red rock crab is six in all marine areas. Minimum size is five inches and either sex may be kept.

Crab fishing rules can be found on pages 137-139 of the 2010-11 edition of Washington's Sportfishing Rules Pamphlet, which contains maps of all the marine areas and sub-areas. The pamphlet is free and available at the more than 600 stores where hunting and fishing licenses are sold. The pamphlet also can be downloaded from WDFW's web site at: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm> .

Before heading out, crabbers should check for any emergency rule changes adopted since the fishing pamphlet was published. Those changes can be found on WDFW's website at <https://fortress.wa.gov/dfw/erules/efishrules/> or by calling the Shellfish Rule Change toll-free hotline at (866) 880-5431.

Trout and steelhead fishing got under way June 5 in area rivers, including the Skokomish, South Fork Skokomish and Dungeness. Anglers should note that selective gear rules are in effect on those rivers to protect wild summer steelhead. Details on rules and limits are online at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/regs/fishregs.htm> .

Tanwax Lake in Pierce County is off to a good start for largemouth bass and rainbow trout. In Kitsap County, Wildcat, Buck, Island and Wye lakes have all received high marks from anglers fishing for largemouth bass and trout. Duck Lake in Grays Harbor County also has been getting accolades from anglers fishing for trout and crappie.

Hunting: Hunters who applied for special big-game hunt permits for the upcoming season can find out if they were chosen by going to the hunt page on the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's website at [www.wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/](http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/). Holders of the special permits can hunt at times and locations beyond those authorized by a general hunting license. Nearly 65,000 hunters submitted 229,761 applications for special hunts for deer, elk, mountain goat, moose, bighorn sheep and wild turkey. The permits will be mailed to successful applicants in mid-July.

Wildlife viewing: July Fourth is always a big day for enjoying the outdoors, and this year's three-day weekend provides the opportunity for an extended stay in one of the state's campgrounds or wilderness areas.

If it's your birding you're interested in, our state has six routes in the "Great Washington State Birding Trail" and one of them circles the Olympic Peninsula. The Olympic Loop stretches from the Nisqually River delta in south Puget Sound west to the Pacific Ocean and north to Cape Flattery before turning east at the Strait and then south to Hood Canal.

Depending on where you are in the Loop, bird watchers can see clouds of shorebirds circle and land on sandy beaches, and birds that appear to fly underwater in bubbling streams. Birds that regularly appear this time of year include dunlin, sanderlings, western sandpipers and nesting rare tufted puffins. Coastal birds include black turnstones, surfbirds and wandering tattlers.

Audubon Washington has produced colorful and informative maps for all six trails. The maps feature drawings of the birds likely to be encountered on the trail. Each map costs \$4.95 and can be purchased at: [http://wa.audubon.org/birds\\_GreatWABirdingTrail.html](http://wa.audubon.org/birds_GreatWABirdingTrail.html). You can link to the Olympia Loop map by clicking on the image to the left.

Be aware, no matter where in the woods you go you're likely to encounter something considerably larger, and potentially more dangerous than birds. To minimize the chance of a bad experience, avoid surprising wildlife, don't feed wild animals and keep your distance so that they can go about their business, providing you with a glimpse into how they live when humans aren't around.

WDFW enforcement officers and land managers are reminding outdoor recreationists that fireworks are not allowed on any of the Department's 900,000 acres in 32 wildlife area complexes and over 150 water access sites across the state and many do not allow camp fires or any other kinds of open fires.

Where campfires are allowed, they are usually restricted to metal fire rings and must be kept to less than three feet in height and diameter. Specific rules by property can be found at [http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife\\_areas/index.html](http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/index.html).

[pagebreak:Southwest Washington]

Fishing: Summer chinook salmon are entering the lower Columbia River in large numbers, although catching them is proving to be a challenge. High, turbid water and floating debris have been giving anglers — especially boat anglers — a workout during the opening days of the season, said Joe Hymer, a WDFW fish biologist.

“Conditions are definitely tough for boat anglers,” Hymer said. “People have been catching some nice fish, but they have to deal with some extra challenges due to the high water and debris.”

Under these conditions, fishing from the bank has some advantages, Hymer said. During creel checks conducted during the first week of fishing, 1,463 bank anglers caught 62 adult chinook and released 25. The 572 boat anglers checked that week reported catching 33 adult summer chinook salmon and releasing 15 others.

Under new rules effective this year, anglers may retain only hatchery-reared chinook with a clipped adipose fin and healed scar. All wild, unmarked fish must be released. That is also the case with steelhead, which are showing up in the catch from the mouth of the Columbia River to Bonneville Dam.

“The trade-off is that this year’s summer chinook fishery is scheduled to run straight through July, rather than just a couple of weeks like last year,” Hymer said. “That wouldn’t have been possible without moving to a selective fishery.”

During the first week’s creel check, bank anglers reported catching 61 steelhead and releasing 13 others. Boat anglers surveyed that week caught eight steelhead and released five more. Anglers fishing the Cowlitz River have also been catching some hatchery steelhead.

According to the pre-season forecast, 88,800 summer chinook will return to the Columbia this year - the largest number since 2002. About a third of those salmon are estimated to be five-year-olds, some weighing up to 40 pounds.

Under this year’s rules, anglers may retain up to two adult hatchery chinook or hatchery steelhead (or one of each) on the mainstem Columbia River from the Megler Astoria Bridge upstream to the Highway 395 Bridge at Pasco. All other salmon - including sockeye - must be released.

That may change, however, given the unexpectedly large number of sockeye counted at Bonneville Dam in recent days, said Cindy Le Fleur, WDFW Columbia River policy coordinator. As of June 22, just over 134,000 sockeye had been tallied at the dam - already more than predicted - and the 26,873 counted the previous day was the second-highest on record for a single day since 1938.

“The rule requiring anglers to release sockeye was adopted because Lake Wenatchee was not expected to reach its escapement goal this year,” Le Fleur said. Given the strong return,

fishery managers from Washington and Oregon may reconsider that decision during a teleconference scheduled Thursday (June 24) at 3 p.m.

The scheduled closure of the sturgeon fishery downstream from the Wauna powerlines will also be up for reconsideration during that meeting, Le Fleur said. Sturgeon fishing has been slow in that area — and throughout the lower Columbia River — for a number of weeks, which may allow fishery managers to extend the season, she said.

Any changes in the sockeye retention rule or the sturgeon season below the Wauna powerlines will be announced on WDFW's website (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/>), the statewide Fishing Hotline (360-902-2500), regional hotline (360-696-6211 ext. 1010) and in a statewide news release.

For anglers hungering for shad, the Dalles Pool is clearly the place to be. During the week ending June 20, bank anglers averaged nine shad per rod although fishing was slow for boat anglers. Below Bonneville Dam, anglers have been averaging between zero and two shad per rod.

Rather catch warmwater fish? Boat anglers fishing The Dalles Pool have been averaging two walleye and a bass per rod. In the John Day Pool, 10 boats reported catching 15 bass and seven walleye.

At Riffe Lake, bank anglers fishing at the dam and Taidnapum have been averaging two landlocked coho per rod, kept or released. Anglers should also be aware that Goose Lake north of Carson was stocked with 2,500 catchable-size brown trout and 3,000 catchable-size cutthroat June 15.

Hunting: Hunters who applied for special big-game hunt permits for the upcoming season can find out if they were chosen by going to the hunt page on the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's website at [www.wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/](http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/). Holders of the special permits can hunt at times and locations beyond those authorized by a general hunting license. Nearly 65,000 hunters submitted 229,761 applications for special hunts for deer, elk, mountain goat, moose, bighorn sheep and wild turkey. The permits will be mailed to successful applicants in mid-July.

Wildlife viewing: During a Sunday drive up the Columbia Gorge, area birder Wilson Cady reports spotting a greater yellowlegs in breeding plumage on a floating log in front of the boat launch at the mouth of the Wind River. "This is only the fifth individual I have seen in Skamania County in the last 30 years," he wrote in a posting on the Tweeteers birding website (<http://www.scn.org/earth/tweeteers/>).

Farther downriver, at the mouth of Eagle Creek overlooking Bonneville Dam, another area birder sighted eight western grebes along with two horned grebes in breeding plumage. Other birds sighted that day include a female common merganser with two young in tow, a male scaup, cormorants and osprey.

Looking for a place to spot birds or just get out of the house? This month marks the first anniversary of the Gibbons Creek trail, a 2.25-mile footpath at the Steigerwald Lake National Wildlife Refuge, east of Washougal. Starting at a parking lot off Highway 14, the trail skirts wetlands, crosses Gibbons Creek and Redtail Lake, and passes through a cottonwood forest en route to the Columbia River. Hikers have plenty of opportunities to see wildlife - particularly neotropical birds and waterfowl - along the way.

According to area birder Wilson Cady, more than 200 of the 300-plus species of birds found in Clark County have been sighted in the 1,049-acre refuge. Great blue heron, bald eagles, greater white-fronted geese, goldfinches, Eurasian wigeon and goldeneye (both common and Barrow's) are just a few of many species of birds known to visit the refuge during the year. For more information on the refuge, see the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service website at <http://www.fws.gov/refuges/profiles/index.cfm?id=13556> .

[pagebreak:Eastern Washington]

Fishing: This is the time to fish Lake Roosevelt, including the Spokane River arm, for some of the tastiest freshwater fish &ndash; walleye. Bill Baker, WDFW northeast district fish biologist, said walleye are distributing throughout the waterway now that they've spawned. The daily catch limit is eight walleye and there's no minimum size, although only one over 22 inches may be retained.

The Seven Bays area and many other spots upstream on the big reservoir are also good for kokanee and rainbow trout fishing. The daily catch limit for kokanee is six fish, although no more than two can be wild fish. The limit on trout is five, but only two over 20 inches may be retained.

With all three species of fish very catchable, it's a good time to purchase the new \$24.50 two-pole endorsement, which allows anglers to use two poles while fishing at Lake Roosevelt and many other lakes throughout the state. For more information about the endorsement, visit <http://wdfw.wa.gov/licensing/twopole/>.

Anglers might want to consider spending a weekend camping at one of the Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area's campgrounds — Evans, Fort Spokane, Gifford, Hunters, Keller Ferry, Kettle Falls and Spring Canyon. Most are on a first-come, first-served basis, but groups need to reserve camp sites. For details see <http://www.nps.gov/laro/>.

Baker also noted that fishing has been good at many rainbow trout lakes in the northeast district. For example, Pend Oreille County's Big Meadow Lake, about seven miles west of Lone on the Meadow Creek Road, is yielding catches of up to 16-inch rainbows.

At the opposite end of the region, the Tucannon River impoundments are cranking out catches of hatchery-stocked rainbow trout. The Tucannon River itself, from the mouth to the Tucannon Hatchery bridge, is also open to fishing. Anglers who have purchased the new \$8.75 Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Endorsement can retain up to three hatchery-marked steelhead from the Tucannon's open waters through October. Selective gear rules and a prohibition on internal combustion motors are in effect upstream of the Turner Road bridge at Marengo.

WDFW's W.T. Wooten Wildlife Area Manager Kari Dingman said Tucannon lake or river anglers, and other outdoor recreationists who camp on the area, are finding everything very green and lush, thanks to recent rains. But that ample vegetation will be fuel for wild fires soon, so she reminds visitors, including Fourth-of-July holiday celebrants, to comply with the area's restrictions on fires and a ban on fireworks. All WDFW wildlife areas and water access sites throughout the region are under the same fireworks ban and similar fire restrictions. For details by area, see <http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/>.

Anglers can get a little bit extra out of their fishing license at the Spokane Indians Baseball Club's fifth annual "Fish and Wildlife Night" on Tuesday, July 6, when game tickets are discounted with the presentation of a valid fishing or hunting license. The game will feature fish and wildlife activities between innings and stadium fish and wildlife displays.

Hunting: Hunters who applied for special big-game hunt permits for the upcoming season can find out if they were chosen by going to the hunt page on the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's website at [www.wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/](http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/). Holders of the special permits can hunt at times and locations beyond those authorized by a general hunting license. Nearly 65,000 hunters submitted 229,761 applications for special hunts for deer, elk, mountain goat, moose, bighorn sheep and wild turkey. The permits will be mailed to successful applicants in mid-July.

Wildlife viewing: Birdwatchers may spot Canada geese with new ornamentation near Sprague Lake,

in Spokane County, or along the Pend Oreille River. WDFW staff and volunteers are capturing geese in these areas to mark them with white neck-collars and metal leg-bands as part of an eastern Washington study to determine if the urban geese are resident or migratory. For more details on this study, see <http://bit.ly/bZ5dEo>. If you see a goose wearing a white neck collar with a number and letter code, you can report it, with the location and date, to the U.S. Geological Survey Bird Banding Lab at 1-800-327-BAND or at <http://bit.ly/djemGf>.

WDFW's W.T. Wooten Wildlife Area Manager Kari Dingman said four new bighorn sheep lambs have been seen with their ewes between Cummings Creek and Deer Lake on the Tucannon Fish Hatchery ridge. "There also have been several reports of black bear sightings on the area, and more moose sightings up around Camp Wooten and the Little Tucannon River," she said.

Dingman says all visitors to the area are finding everything very green and lush, thanks to recent rains. But that ample vegetation will be fuel for wild fires soon, so she reminds visitors, including Fourth-of-July holiday celebrants, to comply with the area's restrictions on fires and ban on fireworks. All WDFW wildlife areas and water access sites throughout the region are under the same fireworks ban and similar fire restrictions. For details by area, see <http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/>.

In Lincoln County, WDFW Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area staff and fishermen recently spotted about eight white pelicans at Z Lake. Meanwhile, colorful songbirds are visible and audible throughout the region as the nesting season is in full swing. Birders in Spokane County report black-headed grosbeaks, western bluebirds, yellow and yellow-rumped warblers, willow flycatchers, western wood-pewees, common yellowthroats, spotted towhees, Bullock's orioles, Lazuli buntings, and northern rough-winged, violet-green, and tree swallows.

[pagebreak:Northcentral Washington]

Fishing: Bob Jateff, WDFW district fish biologist, said lowland lake fishing for rainbow trout has been holding up pretty well in the Okanogan district. "Cooler, wetter weather has been keeping the water temperatures down a bit, and that has contributed to better than average catch rates for the month of June," he said.

Jateff said good selective-gear waters are Chopaka, Aeneas, and Blue lakes in the Sinlahekin, and Big and Little Twin lakes near Winthrop. Other waters that are still providing decent fishing are Wannacut, Pearrygin, and Alta lakes.

WDFW Enforcement Officer Cal Treser recently reported checking numerous limits of trout on Lake Pearygin, along with large crayfish. "If you want to try spiny ray fishing, fish Patterson Lake in the Winthrop area for yellow perch and Leader Lake west of Okanogan for bluegills and crappies," he said.

Jateff also noted the Methow River is still running high, but as water levels start dropping, resident rainbow and cutthroat trout will be catchable. Smaller creeks and rivers can provide fishing opportunities even when the major rivers like the Methow are still running high. "Anglers should pay close attention to the regulations on the Methow because there have been a few changes this year," he said.

Chinook salmon fishing on the mainstem Columbia River and selected tributaries above Wells Dam is scheduled to start July 1. New daily bag limits put in place this year will allow anglers to keep up to three adult chinook salmon, but only one of those can be a wild adult. Anglers should consult the current sportfishing rules pamphlet, because there are certain areas that anti-snagging and night closure rules are in effect.

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Wildlife viewing: WDFW research scientist Gary Koehler recently discovered three lynx kittens while tracking a radio-collared adult female lynx in the North Cascades of western Okanogan County. To minimize disturbance to this federally protected species, the kittens were not handled or marked. But Koehler's photograph is documentation that lynx are still reproducing in Washington.

Matt Monda, WDFW regional wildlife program manager, reminds wildlife enthusiasts and all outdoor recreationists to look at but don't touch wildlife — including the more common species like mule deer. "Does know best how to care for their fawns," Monda said. "The best way to help wildlife families is to give them some space." For more information about living with wildlife, including fawns and baby birds, see <http://wdfw.wa.gov/wlm/living/>.

Birdwatchers may spot Canada geese with new ornamentation near the Tri-Cities, Moses Lake, or Coulee City. WDFW staff and volunteers captured geese in these areas to mark them with white

neck-collars and metal leg-bands as part of an eastern Washington study to determine if such urban geese are resident or migratory. For more details on this study, see <http://bit.ly/bZ5dEo>. If you see a goose wearing a white neck-collar with a number and letter code, you can report it, with the location and date, to the U.S. Geological Survey Bird Banding Lab at 1-800-327-BAND or at <http://bit.ly/djemGf>.

Black bears continue to be more than just visible in the north end of the region. From Wenatchee to Oroville, some bears have been trying to help themselves to everything from garbage to campground barbecues. WDFW enforcement officers and wildlife biologists remind both homeowners and recreationists in bear country to keep temptation away from these omnivores. At home that can include securing compost piles, removing bird feeders, and keeping pet food inside. In camp or at picnic grounds store food supplies in bear-proof containers and clean up grills. For more tips on living with bears, see <http://wdfw.wa.gov/wlm/living/bears.htm>.

Wherever wildlife viewing is enjoyed, WDFW officials remind recreationists to be careful with fire. Recent and abundant rain means lush vegetation can become wildfire fuel. All WDFW wildlife areas and water access sites throughout the region are under a fireworks ban and campfire restrictions. For details by area, see <http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/>.

[pagebreak:Southcentral Washington]

Fishing: High water contributed to a slow start in the fishery for hatchery summer chinook salmon on the Columbia River downriver from Priest Rapids Dam and for hatchery steelhead downstream from the Highway 395 Bridge at Pasco. None of the 60 anglers surveyed in the John Day Pool had caught any salmon or steelhead, although fishing was good for other species.

During the week ending June 20, anglers fishing the John Day Pool caught 259 shad from 15 boats and 15 bass and seven walleye from 10 boats.

“The Columbia, Snake, Yakima and Walla Walla rivers are all running high, improving some fisheries, such as catfish, but making most of the fisheries, especially salmon, problematic,” said Paul Hoffarth, a WDFW fish and wildlife biologist in Pasco.

Hoffarth is optimistic that fishing will pick up for salmon and steelhead as river conditions improve and more summer chinook move past McNary Dam into the mid-Columbia and its tributaries.

Hoffarth reminds anglers that all wild, unmarked chinook salmon and steelhead must be released. The daily limit is six hatchery chinook, up to two of which may be adults. Anglers must stop fishing once they retain the adult portion of their daily limit. Any steelhead retained counts toward the daily limit of two adult fish, Hoffarth said.

Steelhead fishing will remain closed for the Columbia River upstream of the Highway 395 bridge and in the Snake River until the fall.

The spring chinook fishery runs through June 30 on the Yakima, and anglers continue to catch fish in the area between Union Gap and Roza Dam. Surveys indicate that the best fishing is between the Naches River and Roza Dam. There is a daily limit of two hatchery salmon with a clipped adipose fin; wild chinook must be released unharmed.

Water levels in the upper Naches and upper Yakima tributaries are continuing to drop and clear up. Eric Anderson, WDFW fish and wildlife biologist in Yakima, said his trend should continue in the weeks ahead into the summer months, when fishing in most tributaries should be good for wild trout, cutthroat, rainbow and brook trout.

Even though waters in the Columbia and Snake rivers remain high, fishing for smallmouth bass and walleye should improve as those waters recede and get warmer, Anderson said.

Sturgeon fishing remains open in Lake Wallula (McNary Dam to Priest Rapids/Ice Harbor Dams) through July of this year. Be aware, sturgeon fishing is prohibited from Goose Island upstream to Ice Harbor Dam in the Snake River and upstream of the Priest Rapids Hatchery outlet to Priest Rapids Dam in the Columbia River (white sturgeon sanctuaries).

Anderson reminds anglers that most streams have reduced catch and size limits for trout. In addition, there are catch-and-release zones on the Yakima River above Roza Dam, in sections of the Naches River and in Rattlesnake Creek where all trout must be released unharmed. In most large mainstem rivers and streams in the Yakima basin, anglers must use single barbless hooks and no bait.

Lake fishing in Central Washington remains strong, and WDFW is continuing to stock many lakes in the days leading up to the long Fourth of July weekend. Alpine lakes are also an option in the weeks ahead.

“The high country is starting to open up as the snow levels recede,” said Anderson. “There are many excellent opportunities to fish high mountain lakes, most of which are hike- to only.”

Information on high lake stocking in Yakima and Kittitas counties can be obtained from the website link at [http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/regions/reg3/r3\\_highlakes.htm](http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/plants/regions/reg3/r3_highlakes.htm). Anglers need to check directly with WDFW’s regional offices for high lake fish stocking information in other areas.

Meanwhile, kokanee are biting at Keechelus and Rimrock lakes. While they generally run small (9-11 inches), Anderson points out that anglers can keep up to 16 of them daily.

Powerline Lake and Marmes Pond were planted with rainbow trout earlier this spring, but Hoffarth said the cooler temperatures this spring should keep the bite going for a couple more weeks. Both of these lakes are walk-in only.

Jumbo triploid trout are being planted at Lost Lake in Kittitas County, as well as in Dog and Leech lakes in Yakima County. These fish are running about 1.5 pounds each. Leech Lake is fly-fishing only. Also in June, 4,500 catchable-size trout and 200 jumbos are being planted in Easton Pond in Kittitas County.

Other recent lake stocking reports can be checked at the WDFW website <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/stocking/weekly/>

WDFW advises anglers to always check the fishing rules pamphlet for details on a specific river or stream, including what gear is allowed and catch limits. The Fishing in Washington Sportfishing Rules guide is available free at stores that sell fishing licenses. The pamphlet also can be downloaded at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/index.html>. That web page also contains a link to emergency rules that have been enacted since the pamphlet was published.

Hunting: WDFW has published this year’s special hunt drawing results. Hunters can find out how they fared in the lottery by going to <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/> and typing in their 11 digit WILD ID number.

Hunting: Hunters who applied for special big-game hunt permits for the upcoming season can find out if they were chosen by going to the hunt page on the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's website at [www.wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/](http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/). Holders of the special permits can hunt at times and locations beyond those authorized by a general hunting license. Nearly 65,000 hunters submitted 229,761 applications for special hunts for deer, elk, mountain goat, moose, bighorn sheep and wild turkey. The permits will be mailed to successful applicants in mid-July.

Wildlife viewing: The "Great Washington State Birding Trail" pamphlet published by Washington Audubon highlights six prime routes, and two of them are in Central Washington. The Coulee Corridor Scenic Byway is to the north, and the Sun & Sage Loop stretches from the juncture of state highways 123 and 410 on the west to Walla Walla on the eastern edge of the loop. The Columbia River marks the southern boundary.

Within that loop is WDFW's Wenas Wildlife Area, which is located southwest of Ellensburg in both Yakima and Kittitas counties. The area includes parts of the upper Wenas Valley which is considered an Audubon Important Bird Area. Among the birds you can view there are yellow breasted chat, bobolinks, white pelican and horned lark.

The riparian areas in particular provide glimpses of eastern kingbird, tree, violet-green and other species of swallows, gray catbird, yellow warbler, black-headed grosbeak, Lazuli bunting, Bullock's oriole and many others.

Forestland at higher elevations host red-naped sapsucker, downy and white-headed woodpeckers, western wood pewee, mountain chickadee, white-breasted nuthatch, house wren, veery, warbling vireo, Nashville, yellow and MacGillivray's warblers, red crossbill, and western and mountain bluebirds. In the shrub-steppe habitat look for horned lark, sage thrasher, Brewer's and vesper sparrows and loggerhead shrike.

Audubon Washington has produced colorful and informative maps for all six trails. The maps feature drawings of the birds likely to be encountered on the trails and locations of the wildlife viewing areas and points of interest. Each map costs \$4.95 and can be purchased at: [http://wa.audubon.org/birds\\_GreatWABirdingTrail.html](http://wa.audubon.org/birds_GreatWABirdingTrail.html). Viewed online, the maps include links to information about all of the wilderness areas and the birds that can be viewed there.

Be aware that no matter where in Central and Eastern Washington you go this time of year you're likely to encounter animals that are considerably larger, and potentially more dangerous than birds. To minimize the chance of a bad experience, avoid surprising wildlife,

don't feed wild animals and keep your distance so that they can go about their business, providing you with a glimpse into how they live when humans aren't around.

For more information, WDFW's "Living With Wildlife" series is available at:  
<http://wdfw.wa.gov/wlm/living/>.

WDFW biologists are asking hunters and hikers to keep an eye out for Canada geese that have been banded as part of an ongoing effort to track their movements, their lifespan and how they use rural and urban habitat.

This is the third consecutive year of the study. As in past years, WDFW is asking waterfowl hunters and hikers to report leg band information if they harvest or encounter a marked goose. The highly visible collars can be reported by any observer.

Reports of band or collar codes, along with locations and dates, should be made to U.S. Geological Survey Bird Banding Laboratory at 1-800-327-BAND, or online at  
<http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/BBL/homepage/call800.htm>